

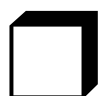
Health Pathways

Newsletter of the Health Professions Career Opportunity Program

July 1999

Volume 21, No. 8

In this issue...



Medical Clerkship Program



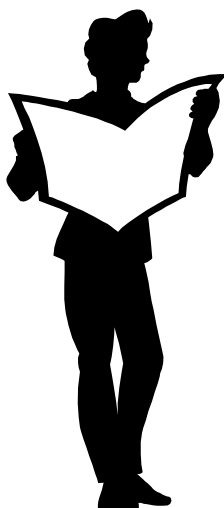
1999-2000 Contract Awards



HCTP Insert



Fan Mail!



11 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

There is more involved in applying to medical school than just getting good grades and high MCAT scores. Here are 11 things you should know about the application process.

1. Apply to all California medical schools.
2. Apply to some out-of-state medical schools with good track records of accepting minority Californians. Limit your out-of-state applications to a realistic number.
3. Apply early, as soon after June 1st as possible.
4. Grade point averages of 2.6-3.0 and above are in an acceptance range.
5. MCATs of 6,7,8 and above are in an acceptance range for U.S. medical schools.
6. Put time and thought into preparing, organizing, and writing your personal statement.
7. Identify and recruit faculty and support staff who you can count on to produce quality letters of recommendation.
8. Visit medical schools you are applying to before an interview.
9. Buy some books about the medical school admission process.
10. Prioritize the schools you apply to according to your preference for enrollment.
11. Realistically evaluate your financial status before applying.

1. Apply to all California schools

Unless you have a dislike for a particular medical school, you should apply to each California medical school.

- Charles R. Drew University, Los Angeles
- Loma Linda University
- Stanford University
- Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Los Angeles

- University of California, San Diego
- University of California, San Francisco
- University of Southern California
- Western University/College of Osteopathic medicine, Pomona

This is based on findings that a significant proportion of minority Californians apply to only two California medical schools despite the fact that they want to stay in California to study medicine.

(See *11 Things* on page 6)

Advanced Clinical Experience for Medical Students

Traditional Medicine Clerkship Program

The Association of American Indian Physicians and the University of Minnesota Center of American Indian and Minority Health are once again offering the Traditional Medicine Clerkship Program. It will involve Native American physician preceptors providing educational experiences in the provision of health care for Native American individuals through community health care systems (urban or reservation setting) which encompasses the sociocultural implications of Native American medical practices as provided by traditional Native American healers.

Expected outcomes will include an expanded understanding of Native American focused community health care systems, health issues pertinent to this population, and the impact of traditional Native American healers in the community. Other expected outcomes will include, but are not limited to, greater insight by the students into the healing practices of traditional medicine men; perceptions of Native American patients with respect to disease and health care; and interfaces between traditional Native American and western medicine.

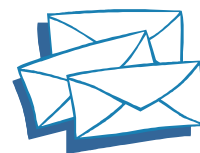
Prerequisites: Must be a third- or fourth-year medical student plus the following: Extensive previous experience in Indian communities, significant exposure to traditional Indian medicine, and a basic knowledge of Indian health. Community experience deemed significant if the student has lived within the Indian community for a substantial part of their life or is a member or

descendent of a federally recognized tribe. Exposure to traditional Indian medicine shall be deemed significant if the student has observed or participated in traditional Indian ceremonies. Knowledge of Indian health must be demonstrated by previous clinical experience, didactic coursework in Indian health, or other exposure as documented by the student. The course director will evaluate prerequisites.

Special Instructions: The student must contact the course director to determine if prerequisites are met at least six weeks prior to the rotation. Each site is individually arranged and will be dependent upon the availability of preceptors. If prerequisites are not met for this rotation, students are encouraged to contact their curriculum office to arrange other Indian Health Service (IHS) rotations.

Clerkship sites are located in New Mexico, Montana, Arizona, Alaska, Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma. The clerkship is four to six weeks in duration at one of the selected reservation or urban based Native American days in the clinical setting; one day in the community and one day with the traditional healer. Clerkships are limited and efforts will be made to accommodate students in scheduling clerkships.

Interested students may contact AAIP at (405) 946-7072 e-mail: aaip@ionet.net or Dr. Gerald Hill, University of Minnesota, Center for American Indian and Minority Health, at (612) 626-2075 e-mail: ghill@maroon.tc.umn.edu.



Do you have a story or suggestions for *Health Pathways*? We welcome your contributions. Mail us your ideas, letters, or articles today! Announcements of scheduled events need to be sent to us at least six months in advance to appear in the newsletter. Be sure to include your name and address on all correspondence. The Health Professions Career Opportunity Program retains the right to edit all materials. Contact us at:

HPCOP
1600 Ninth Street, Rm. 441
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 654-1730
(916) 654-3138, fax

Health Pathways

Health Pathways (ISSN 0164-7598) is published four times a year by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, 1600 Ninth Street, Rm. 441, Sacramento, CA 95814. Periodical postage paid at Sacramento, CA. Postmaster: Send addresses changes to *Health Pathways*, 1600 Ninth Street., Rm. 441, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Guest Articles

Views of contributing writers do not necessarily reflect the policy of the department, agency, or administration. Letters to the editor are encouraged. Although we do not pay for guest articles, manuscripts are welcome. We reserve the right to edit all material.

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What's in it for me?

Every year as the Health Professions Career Opportunity Program (HPCOP) announces the contract awards, you may ask yourself, “What’s in it for me?” Lost among the names, addresses, and award category descriptions may be the one program that can help you achieve your health professional goals. Our mission here is really quite simple—we are here to help you achieve those goals.

If you are interested in medical school, we have a variety of programs, with proven track records, to help you. A **Post Baccalaureate Program** is offered to assist students unsuccessful in gaining admission to medical school. This course will help you increase your MCAT score and significantly improve your chances of being admitted.

A **Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) Preparation Course** is also offered. This course will assist you in improving your MCAT scores by offering subject reviews that will improve test-taking skills. This is an intensive course, but it can have a tremendous impact on your successful application to medical school. Up to a 29-point increase from the course pretest to the actual MCAT has been reported—a significant increase in light of this difficult obstacle to medical school. **Medical School Reapplicant Counseling** is also offered. This provides service and conference counseling for students who have applied but were not admitted to medical school. The program will assist you in improving your application.

If dentistry is your passion, we offer a **Dental Admission Test (DAT) Preparation Course**. This course has resulted in increased scores for students just like yourself. Don’t let this test stop you from achieving your goal. The course can be a big help in leaping this hurdle. A **Dental School Applicants Conference** is also offered. This conference will provide information about the dental school application process and dental career opportunities.

Interested in Public Health? Attend a **Public Health Conference**. These conferences discuss current issues in public health, career opportunities, and the application process. Here’s what previous students had to say about one conference—“Overall,

the conference was very informative!” “Most of the speakers had interesting presentations about their jobs, experience and education.” “The fact that there are a lot of choices in Public Health was made very clear—now the hard part, choosing!”

These conferences have been well-attended by students and faculty. If this is your field, attending this conference can be of significant help when applying to school. In addition, a **Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Preparation Course** is scheduled. The GRE is necessary to gain admission to schools of public health. This very successful course is designed to improve your scores and assist you in your application to public health school.

In addition to the programs already mentioned, other developmental, training, and service programs are available. They include: a **Prehealth Academic Support Group, Physician Assistant Development program, Health Promotion/Health Risk Reduction Allied Health Manpower Training program, and Nurse Outreach and Development program**.

If you’re undecided on what health field you would like to enter, or if you want help to improve your study habits, the **Health Career Opportunity/Survival Skills Conference** may assist you. These conferences will acquaint you with skills to improve your study habits, teach you time management skills, and introduce you to the various health professions you may consider. Here’s what others have said about our conferences—“This is the kind of event that we need to have often, to encourage people to study hard, to improve skills, to get an education.” “Study has always been very hard for me...With today’s presentation ‘I saw the light.’ I picked up some wonderful ideas.”

Good study skills can have a tremendous impact on your college career. Good study skills can increase your chances for success as a student and help you use your time to better advantage. As we all know, time is one of the most valuable commodities for any student. Contact our contractors for a program that is right for you.



≡≡≡ *HPCOP Contract Awards* ≡≡≡

Dr. David Werdegar, MD, MPH, Director of the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHDP), has announced the awarding of \$196,000 in statewide service contracts for economically/educationally disadvantaged health professional development activities in the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The contracts will be awarded through the Health Professions Career Opportunities Program (HPCOP).

These awards, granted to public and post secondary institutions, private nonprofit health organizations, and others, focus on increasing the number of economically/educationally disadvantaged students entering health professional careers.

Thousands of students have benefited from these projects. Activities to be conducted during the 1999-2000 contract period and the contract recipients are listed below along with the contracting organizations. If you find an activity that interests you, contact the sponsoring organization for more information.

MCAT Preparation Course

This course is designed to increase student scores on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) which is one of the most difficult hurdles to acceptance in to medical school. Individual admissions counseling is provided.

California State University,
Fresno
SCOP
2555 E. San Ramon Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
(209) 278-4748
Contact: Francisco Pineda, MSW

DAT Preparation Course

This course is designed to increase student scores on the Dental Admissions Test (DAT). Individual admissions counseling is provided.

University of California,
San Francisco
School of Dentistry
513 Parnassus Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94143-0403
(415) 476-2712
Contact: Charles J. Alexander,
PhD

California State University,
Fresno
SCOP
2555 E. San Ramon Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
(209) 278-4748
Contact: Francisco Pineda, MSW



GRE Preparation Course

This course is designed to increase student scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), a prerequisite into graduate school. Individual admissions counseling is provided.

University of California,
Los Angeles
School of Public Health
P.O. Box 951772
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1772
(310) 825-7449
Contact: Abdelmonem A. Afifi,
PhD

California State University,
San Bernardino
McNair Scholar's Program, AD-143
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407
(909) 880-7344
Contact: Pamela A. Mercant
Guidry, MA

Survival Skills

Offers information to help students attain their health professional goals. Includes training in time management, note taking, and good study habits.

University of California, Riverside
Career Services Center
900 University Ave.
Riverside, CA 92521
(909) 787-3631
Contact: Deborah J. McCoy, MA

California State University,
Fresno
SCOP
2555 E. San Ramon Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
(209) 278-4748
Contact: Francisco Pineda, MSW

California State University,
San Bernardino
500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407
(909) 880-5315
Contact: Jeffery M. Thompson,
PhD

Physician Assistant Development

A recruitment and retention course to increase the number of economically/educationally disadvantaged students completing Physician Assistant training programs.



University of California, Davis
2525 Stockton Blvd., Ste. 1025
Sacramento, CA 95817
(916) 734-5076
Contact: Janet L. Mentink, PhD

Riverside Community College
Health, Human and Public Services
16130 Lasselle Street
Moreno Valley, CA 92551
(909) 485-6196
Contact: Leslie W. Howard

Dental School Applicant Conference

Information about the dental school application process and dental career opportunities.

University of California,
San Francisco
School of Dentistry
513 Parnassus Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94143-8438
(415) 476-2712
Contact: Charles J. Alexander,
PhD

California State University,
Fresno
SCOP
2555 E San Ramon Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
(209) 278-4748
Contact: Francisco Pineda, MSW

Public Health Conference

Introduces students to public health and provides information on applying to California's schools of public health.

University of California,
Los Angeles
School of Public Health
Box 951772
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1772
(310) 825-7449
Contact: Abdelmonem A Afifi,
PhD

University of California, Berkeley
School of Public Health
19 Warren Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720
(510) 643-8451
Contact: Edward E. Penhoet, PhD

Medical School Reapplicant Conference

Service and conference counseling for students who have applied but were not admitted to medical school. Assists in improving their application. Additional information is provided at the conference.

University of California, Irvine
College of Medicine
Educational Affairs
Box 4089
Irvine, CA 92697-4089
(714) 824-4610
Contact: Deborah C. Stewart,
MD

California State University,
Fresno
SCOP
2555 E. San Ramon Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
(209) 278-4748
Contact: Francisco Pineda, MSW

Postbaccalaureate Program

Intensive, long-term assistance for students to gain admission to medical school.

University of California,
San Francisco
School of Medicine
Box 0414
513 Parnassus Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94143-0410
(415) 502-1646
Contact: Michael V. Drake, MD

University of California, Irvine
College of Medicine
Educational Affairs
P.O. Box 4089
Irvine, CA 92697-4089
(714) 824-4610
Contact: Deborah C. Stewart,
MD



(See *AWARDS* on page 11)

(*11 Things*, from page 1)

Many of them apply to out-of-state medical schools that accept few out-of-state residents and are consequently rejected. In looking at some students' records, several of them each year would have been accepted by at least one California medical school had they applied to all of them.

2. Apply to out-of-state medical schools

Apply to those out-of-state medical schools with good track records of accepting minority Californians. It is important to remember that many schools almost exclusively accept residents of their own state. Some schools accept few, if any, California minority students. On the other hand, there are some out-of-state schools with very good track records for accepting and training minority Californians. You should probably apply to at least a few of these schools. It is wise to apply to five to seven schools to ensure the likelihood that you will be accepted by at least one. For information on identifying schools accepting out-of-state students, refer to the *Minority Student Opportunities at U.S. Medical Schools (MSOUSMS)* which is published biennially by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC). This publication provides a narrative description covering the following topic areas: (1) Recruitment, (2) Admissions, (3) Academic Support Programs, (4) Enrichment Programs, (5) Student Financial Assistance, (6) Educational Partnerships, and (7) Other Pertinent Information. The data section shows the number of applicants, the number offered an acceptance, the number of matriculants, the number enrolled in the first-year class (including

repeating and continuing students), the number enrolled in all years, and the number of graduates. To attain a copy of the most recently published *MSOUSMS* contact the AAMC at (202) 828-0600 or order it on their Website at: www.aacm.org/meded/minority/minstud/msousms.htm



3. Apply early

If you are applying for admission for Fall 1999, you should have applied through AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service) early so that you could meet the June 15th opening date for sending in a completed application.

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of applying early. Many schools consider applications in the order in which they are received. If you apply early, your application is reviewed early, and you are generally considered for admission at a time when the school has plenty of space available for minority students.

This also applies to those students awaiting August MCAT scores at the time of application. All medical schools will accept your application without MCAT scores if there is an indication that August scores are forthcoming. For students awaiting new MCAT scores, medical school admissions

offices will prepare your application but defer final processing until receipt of your August results. However, this is done only by a specific request from you. Applying early in both cases ensures that your application will be preprocessed and ready for completion when your scores are received.

In our experience with counseling rejected applicants, we have come across several cases where we were inclined to think that the major reason a person was rejected was because of a late application. For many schools, an early application can effectively be translated to a .2, .3, or .4 grade point advantage (which you worked over three years to achieve) and/or a point or two on your MCAT scores. Applying early (e.g. June) could do as much or more to improve your chances of acceptance, as would many hours of studying for your classes or the MCAT.

If more minority students applied in June as opposed to September or October, a larger number of minority students would ultimately be enrolled in California medical schools. Early applications often lead to early acceptance. Minority students with multiple acceptances would be in a better position to select the school they will enroll in earlier and make possible the acceptance of more minority student from waiting lists.



(See *11 Things* on page 12)

New Physician Assistant Educational Programs Accredited

The American Academy of Physician Assistants announced today that the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) has granted provisional accreditation to six physician assistant (PA) educational programs. The newest PA programs are located at:

- James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia
- Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York
- Riverside Community College in Riverside, California
- Samuel Merritt College in Oakland, California
- Texas Tech University in Midland, Texas
- Touro College in New York City, New York

CAAHEP's action brings the total number of accredited physician assistant programs to 116.

Provisional accreditation is granted to new programs that meet the established stringent criteria for all physician assistant education programs but have not yet accepted their first class of students. The provisionally accredited programs must reapply for initial accreditation no later than six months after graduating their first class. Programs that fail to be approved at that time lose their accredited status.



CAAHEP has also granted full accreditation to four PA programs that previously held provisional accreditation. They are located at:

- Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida
- Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York
- University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Medical College of Ohio in Toledo, Ohio

CAAHEP has also continued the accreditation status for PA educational programs located at:

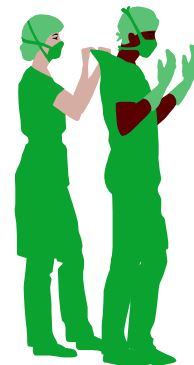
- University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida
- Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
- University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa
- Midwestern University in Downers Grove, Illinois
- Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Louisiana
- Springfield College/Baystate Health System in Springfield, Massachusetts

- Brooklyn Hospital/Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York
- University of Texas/Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas

Physician assistants are licensed health professionals who practice medicine with physicians using a team model of care. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, suture lacerations, assist in surgery, and in nearly all states can write prescriptions.

In order to practice as a physician assistant, a student must be a graduate of a CAAHEP accredited program, must pass the national certification exam for all physician assistants, and must be licensed by the state.

(See **PA** on page 10)



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO

“Why a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene? Why UCSF?”

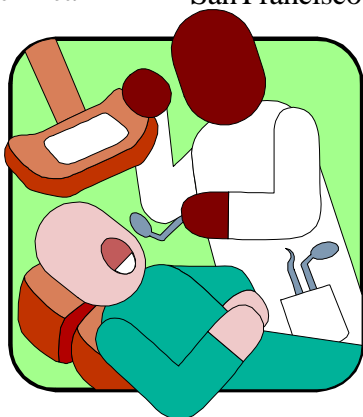
A student preparing for a career as a dental hygienist can't predict what bends and twists the road to his/her career will take. Dental hygiene is more than a job or a series of jobs in one setting. It is a lifelong career that has the potential to link together such diverse experiences as private clinical practice, a faculty position in a dental hygiene school, or director of educational services for a dental manufacturer. UCSF's Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree prepares the dental hygiene graduate with the solid educational foundation for all career paths, including the possible future pursuit of a Master's degree.

October 1997, brought passage of a long-awaited bill by the California Legislature that now allows hygienists with a Bachelor of Science degree, after a specified amount of additional preparation, to expand their scope of practice and treatment on patients who are home-bound or in convalescent and nursing home facilities.

Although many perceive a B.S. program as being the longer route to dental hygiene as compared to the community college programs, this is often a misconception. With fierce competition for the community college spaces and a list of prerequisites equal in length to ours, the community college dental hygiene graduate often has completed four years of college by the time he or she has earned an Associate Arts (A.A.) or Associate

Science (A.S.) degree. Those accepted into our undergraduate program with the proper prerequisites are awarded the Bachelor of Science degree upon completion of our two-year program.

The University of California, San Francisco campus offers dental hygiene students the benefit of being fully integrated into a health science campus that offers professional programs in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing. The dental hygiene



student experiences a high quality dental school-based education and an opportunity to develop a teamwork approach with dental students. The faculty includes authors of dental publications and researchers who are in the forefront of today's dental technology.

UCSF prepares dental hygiene graduates who are well trained to deal with today's increasingly complex oral health problems. We welcome applicants who will feel challenged by the diverse academic and clinical training they will receive and who may become future leaders in their profession.

To address our original questions, *Why a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene and Why UCSF?* Both together provide a quality dental hygiene education that will optimally prepare you for the wonderful career you have selected.

What is a Perfusionist?



Another member of the Allied Health Care field is a Perfusionist. A Perfusionist is a health team member that operates heart and lung equipment.

The need for heart-lung machines and people who operate them is increasing. Heart-lung machines are most often used in transplant and bypass surgeries, for respiratory illnesses, and for patients who suffer heart failure. With technological advances in respiratory equipment and the population in California aging, the occupation of Perfusionist is expected to grow.

Perfusionists set up and operate heart-lung machines that take over the functions of the patient's heart and lungs during surgery or respiratory failure. The Perfusionists operate blood pressure, electrocardiograph and electroencephalograph machines, and other related equipment. Before surgery the Perfusionists must consult with the surgeon in charge to decide which equipment to use. During surgery, the Perfusionists administer certain medications as needed throughout surgery and keep the surgeon and anesthesiologist informed of the patient's condition.

Perfusionists may participate in clinical research activities involving testing and use of new techniques and organ perfusion equipment such as pumps, oxygenators, and heat exchangers. Maintaining, testing, and cleaning the equipment is also required of the Perfusionists.

For more information on becoming a perfusionist visit the **California Occupational Guide** Website on Perfusionists at: www.calmis.cahwnet.gov/file/occguide/MEDTRANS.HTM

As part of the Health Careers Training Project's attempt to provide you with information regarding the allied health occupations, each issue will focus on at least one allied health profession, and will include specific information regarding: job duties, working conditions, employment trends, salaries, entrance requirements, and advancement opportunities.

Medical Assistants

The Job

MEDICAL ASSISTANTS do simple lab work and clinical duties in doctors' offices or other medical offices. They record patients' weight, height, temperature, blood pressure, and medical history. Medical Assistants help doctors examine and treat patients and do routine chores needed for good office operation. They sterilize instruments and equipment used in treatment and diagnosis. They may also give shots and run routine lab tests, such as urinalysis and blood counts, and take electrocardiograms. Other clinical duties may include telling patients about medication and self-treatment and applying bandages.

Medical Assistants may also arrange instruments and equipment in the examining rooms; check office and lab supplies; and keep the waiting, consulting, and examination rooms neat and orderly.

Medical Assistants may also have a variety of clerical duties, depending on the size of the office in which they work. Medical Assistants employed in hospitals or outpatient facilities may help doctors in emergencies. They may process paperwork without the direct supervision of a doctor, for example, in admissions or medical records departments. Those in small offices usually handle both clerical and clinical duties. They schedule appointments and log-in patients, get information from them, set up hospital admissions, and schedule surgeries. Medical

Assistants also record and file information on patients and medical records, answer phone calls, order supplies, send out letters, bill patients, complete insurance forms, and write down dictation. In some offices, they keep financial records and handle credit, collections, and other bookkeeping duties. More and more, assistants do routine clerical work, such as record keeping and billing.



Working Conditions

Medical Assistants usually work in well-lit, air-conditioned offices. When they work they have to lift, stand, stoop, and walk. Assistants often work under pressure, answering phones and always having to be ready to handle emergencies.

Uniforms are usually required and may be supplied by employers. Medical Assistants may join the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) or other groups like it.

Employment Outlook

The California Projections of Employment, published by the Labor Market Information Division of the Employment Development Department, estimates that the number of Medical Assistants in California will reach 52,390 by 2005, and increase in new jobs of 21,510 over the number there was in 1993.

There will also be an estimated 9,480 job openings due to people retiring or leaving the occupation. Added to the 21,510 new jobs expected, this makes for an estimated total of 30,990 job opportunities through 2005. (These figures do not include self-employment nor openings due to turnover.)

The number of jobs for Medical Assistants is expected to grow more than twice as fast as the average for all jobs through 2005 because of expected growth in the health services industry. In fact, Medical Assistants is one of the fastest growing jobs in California.

Chances for jobs are expected to be best in small offices where employers train on-the-job or hire trainees from community colleges or private vocational training school programs. Medium size to large hospitals or clinics prefer graduates of accredited training programs and certified medical workers.

Most job opportunities will come from growing public and private health care programs. In addition, many jobs will open up each year to replace workers who

(See *Assistants* on page 10)

(*Assistants*, from page 9)

die, retire, or leave the occupation for other reasons. Experienced Medical Assistants will enjoy the best opportunities; beginners can expect competition for jobs.

Wages, Hours, and Fringe Benefits

Salaries for Medical Assistants depend on where they work and the size of the business they work for. Small towns and small employers, tend to pay lower wages than bigger ones.

Medical Assistants with no prior experience may start from minimum wage to \$13.00 per hour. Fully experienced assistants can earn up to \$21.00 an hour.

The workweek for Medical Assistants is usually 40 hours, Monday through Friday, but some Saturday work may be required. Many employers hire applicants part-time.

Fringe benefits include paid vacations, holidays, health and other types of insurance and retirement plans.

Entrance Requirements and Training

A high school diploma or GED is preferred by most employers. Helpful high school courses include English, mathematics, biology, typing, bookkeeping, computers, and office practice. Some doctors will train on the job, but most prefer to hire those who have gone through an accredited medical assisting program. These are offered in some community colleges and vocational schools. The programs provide students with a basic knowledge of examination room procedure and lab techniques.

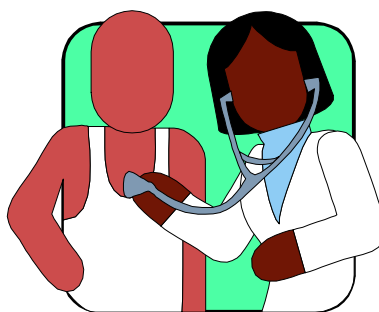
Those who meet the qualifications of the American

Association of Medical Assistants may get certified after passing a written test. Doctors usually consider certified Medical Assistants to be highly qualified.

Another distinction in this field is to be a Registered Medical Assistant (RMA). This title is awarded by the American Medical Technologists if you meet their qualifications and pass a written test. RMA's are respected for their training and skill.

Assistants should be in good health, neat, clean, well-groomed, and courteous. They should also use good judgment in dealing with patients' confidential records. Tact and good communication skills are also necessary.

Many employers prefer English/Spanish speaking ability. Most require a pre-employment physical exam. Experience is helpful.



Advancement

Promotion for Medical Assistants is usually limited to raises and more responsible duties. In big hospitals and clinics, those with leadership abilities may get to the position of office manager. In general, though, promotional opportunities are few, especially in small offices.

Finding the Job

Jobs as Medical Assistants may be found by applying to doctors' offices, government personnel offices, college placement centers, private employment agencies, and the California Employment

Development Department Job Match Program. There is information about job openings in newspaper classified ads. Those looking for a civil service job must pass a test.

Additional Sources of Information

California Medical Assistants Association
PO Box 121755
Chula Vista, CA 91912
(619) 482-9303

American Association of Medical Assistants
20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1575
Chicago, IL 60600
(312) 899-1500

Source: State of California, Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, Information Services Group, (916) 262-2162

(*PA*, from page 7)

CAAHEP is an independent organization responsible for accrediting allied health and physician assistant educational programs in the United States. The commission's membership included representatives from these various professions as well as representatives from national medical and surgical organizations.

AAPA is the only national organization to represent physician assistants in all medical and surgical specialties and all work settings. Founded in 1968, the Academy works to promote quality, cost-effective health care, and the professional and personal growth of PAs.

For more information about the physician assistant profession, visit the AAPA Web site at: www.aapa.org.



A LETTER FROM HAWAII...

Aloha! Health Pathways,

I would like to thank you for all of the information sent to me over the years. In 1987, I was an undecided sophomore at the University of Hawaii participating in a summer program called the Health Careers Opportunity Program. It was shortly after the completion of this summer program that I remember receiving your literature and really making a firm decision on a college major. Based on your overview of the qualifications and outlook, I decided on the field of nursing. I was appreciative of your staff for providing information and updating students on the many opportunities offered throughout the states for people pursuing various health care career paths.

It is now 1999, and I have finished both my Associates and Bachelors degree in nursing and have gone on to complete my Master's in Public Health Degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Coming full circle, I am now a Health Career Counselor with Ke Ola O Hawaii, Inc. My obligations are focused on reaching out to minority/ disadvantaged high school students and career counseling those students who are interested in the health care field. I have been able to facilitate mentor programs as well as spend some quality time one-on-one with students and their parents. Together we map out career and academic plans for the future.

Another exciting project that I am involved in, which is something very special to me, is implementing a summer health-careers workshop. Open only to Hawaii residents, it gives 30 minority/disadvantaged college freshman and/or sophomores the opportunity to experience a two-week residential program at the UH Manoa campus. Our goal is to expose these students to as many health careers as possible. We do our best to clarify, confirm, and reemphasize the fundamentals of seeking a specific health care career and the preparation involved.

I know this is a far cry from practicing in a hospital as a nurse; however, for me the bottom line is that a lot of people have helped me get through the system and now it's my turn to return the favor and help other minority/disadvantaged students become successful. I love what I do, and I have seen many students achieve success through our various programs.

Thank you for your continued support through your literature.

Sincerely,
Terry Visperas



(AWARDS, from page 5)

Health Promotion/ Health Risk Reduction—Allied Health Manpower Training Program

Pilot project for education and training in health promotion and health risk reduction.

California State University,
Northridge
The University Corporation
18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330-8232
(818) 677-3101
Contact: Jerome S. Seliger, PhD

White Memorial Medical Center
1720 Cesar E. Chavez Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90033-2642
(323) 260-5789
Contact: Luis Samaniego, MD

Nurse Outreach and Development Program

Prepares economically/ educationally disadvantaged students for an accredited Registered Nurse (RN) degree program. Designed to provide opportunities for learning clinical care and academic preparation for the natural and biological sciences, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.

University of Southern California
School of Nursing
1540 Alcazar Street, CHP 222
Los Angeles, CA 90033
(323) 442-2001
Contact: Mary Anne Camarillo,
MSN

College of the Sequoias
School of Nursing
915 So. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 730-3732
Contact: Cherie Rector, PhD,
RN-C

4. Grade point averages of 2.6 – 3.0 are in an acceptance range

Below is printed the grade point averages of minority Californians ACCEPTED to U.S. medical schools in 1997-1998.

<u>Mean Undergraduate GPA's of ACCEPTED 1st year students</u>			
Self-Description	BCPM*	AO**	Total GPA
Mexican American Chicano # Accepted 147	3.16	3.40	3.25
Black/African- American # Accepted 94	3.06	3.39	3.20
American Indian # Accepted 19	3.14	3.27	3.21
Mainland Puerto Rican # Accepted 7	3.18	3.48	3.30
Source: <i>Minority Student Opportunities in U.S. Medical Schools</i> . AAMC.			
*BCPM: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math			
**AO: All Other academic subjects			

As you can see from this chart, the mean grade point average of various minority groups accepted to medical school is generally in the 3.2 to 3.3 range. The fact that these are mean or average GPAs suggests that some of the minority students who were accepted had GPAs that were lower than average. We would caution you that mean GPAs of minority students accepted to California schools may be a little bit higher, but not too much higher. You can assume that mean GPAs of approximately 3.0 and above will be competitive in California.

Schools will look at your academic record in a number of different ways. As well as evaluating overall GPAs; Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics (BCPM); and “all other” GPAs, medical schools will also pay attention to an applicant’s academic performance by class

year over the course of their education. In most cases, it is preferable to report a history of stable, consistent academic performance by class year over the course of their education. While, it is also preferable to report a history of stable, consistent academic performance over the course of premedical study, it is also considered commendable to have demonstrated a clear upward trend in your academic record. This can be significant for students with lower GPAs received earlier in their education. Steady improvement, combined with good MCAT scores and solid letters of recommendation, are viewed positively by admission committees as they tend to reflect a student’s motivation and overall ability to overcome setbacks.

5. MCATs of 6, 7, 8, are in an acceptance range for a U. S. medical school

The same data shows mean GPAs of accepted minority Californians are in the 3.0 to 3.3 range, and also shows that the mean MCAT scores of accepted students range from 7 to 9. Thus, some of those accepted had MCAT scores which were in the 7, 6, and even 5 range.

Some minority premedical students are counseled or led to believe that they have little chance of acceptance unless they have double digit MCATs however, MCAT scores of 10 or above are achieved by approximately 30 percent of all persons taking the MCAT. Since approximately 50 percent of all of the students taking the MCAT are admitted to medical school, clearly a significant percentage of all students accepted



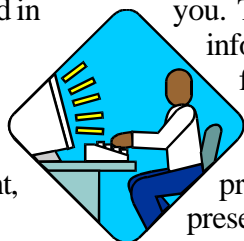
to medical school nationwide had MCAT scores that were less than 10.

The new MCAT, given for the first time in April 1991, retains the 0-15 rating scale for scoring everything but the written sample subsection. This means that for the Verbal Reasoning, Physical and Biological Sciences subsections, the acceptable mean will continue to be in the same ranges as before. Instead of a numerical rating, the written (essay) portion of the new MCAT will be given an alpha rating.

The newer MCAT exam has been condensed to incorporate reasoning skills in each tested area. You will no longer be expected to merely provide formula-based answers. Rather, you must be able to extract information and apply it in varied and sometimes unique ways. You will be expected to interpret data from a variety of formats, including written passages, tables, charts and graphs. None of the problems are intended to be particularly complex. The successful student will be able to identify the basic concepts addressed and grasp the information provided to solve the problem. Students should refer to the most recent *MCAT Student Manual* for information on the content and format of the exam that you will take. This manual is available for order through the AAMC.

6. Put thought into writing your personal statement

Use a person who is skilled in written English to review a draft of your personal statement. The personal statement on the AMCAS form is extremely important, especially for minority applicants. Other than your



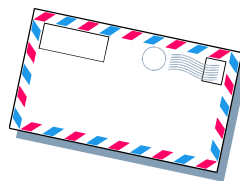
grades and MCAT scores, your personal statement may be the only chance you have to communicate with persons involved in admissions because at some schools, admissions office staff review your personal statement. If your grades and MCATs are not outstanding, a weak or grammatically poor personal statement may be the basis for screening out your application before it is even forwarded to a formal admissions committee. At the admissions committee level, there are many applicants with fairly good GPAs and MCAT scores and often the major determinant whether you are asked to interview will be your personal statement. In addition, during the interview, you will often be asked about statements you made in your personal statement.

Think of your personal statement as an opportunity to share with the admissions committee those qualifications and attributes which make you a unique applicant. Include what you believe will make you a good physician when you finish your training. In your personal statement, you may want to tell the admissions committee about your background, why you decided to become a physician, your plans and desires. You may also want to discuss what barriers or problems you may have overcome.

Remember there is no formula for writing a personal statement, and nobody can write an essay for you. The manner that the

information is conveyed, the format, syntax, phrasing, etc., is just as important as the facts and dates you present. Be careful how you present your narrative. Try to relate information in a direct but

personally engaging way. Avoid using clichés and borrowing ideas haphazardly for other sources. Remember that admission committee evaluators read through numerous personal statements each year. Those that will impress them the most will appear fresh and sincere and provide a clear picture of the applicant and his or her goals.



7. Identify and recruit faculty and support staff for letters of recommendation

Letters of recommendation are an important component of the total application package. They can do much to confirm the merit of an application. In some cases, they may sway an admission committee to vote in your favor should all other factors render you indistinguishable from other applicants. Conversely, poor or nondescript letters of recommendation can work against you. It is important to carefully choose your references, both science and non-science. The best letters come from instructors early in your academic career. Often minority students are reluctant to acquaint themselves with faculty outside the classroom. This is a mistake! Make time to visit your professors or their assigned TAs during scheduled office hours. If you have difficulty with course material, this is a must. Even if you are doing well, visiting your instructors and giving them a chance to know you will usually result in worthwhile dialogue and meaningful contacts. Ask them about their work in their chosen field. If you are interested, ask about possible research experience. Share with them your goal of becoming a physician.

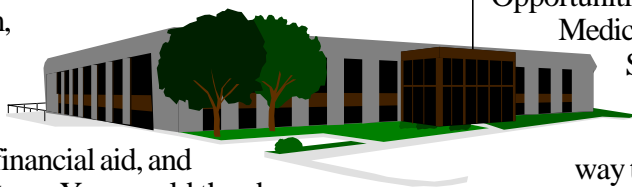
(See *11 Things* on next page)

(11 Things, from previous page)

Seek their advice in designing your curriculum and/or in selecting related areas of academic interest. Remember that most faculty are quite open to exchanges with students and in helping to promote their success.

8. Visit medical schools before an interview

It is a good idea to visit the medical schools, at least those in California, to which you are applying. You can call in advance and make an appointment to meet with staff, students, and faculty who are active in minority admissions. It is also a good idea to take along a copy of your AMCAS application or transcripts. Get to know students, faculty, and staff at each school who are active in minority recruitment and admissions. By visiting the schools early and speaking with persons who can help you, you will acquire friends who are active in admissions and who could support your acceptance. In short, by getting to know you, you could be viewed as a real person and not just another application. While at the school, find out about the curriculum, workload, support services, available financial aid, and other matters. You would thus be in a better, more informed position to prioritize your choices among the various schools so that if you get multiple acceptances, you could more easily and quickly decide at which school you will enroll.



9. Buy books about the medical school admission process.

Every applicant to medical school should

buy *Medical School*

Admission Requirements (the most current issue also available on CD-ROM). This book is available starting in May in most college and medical school bookstores and is worth the investment. It contains chapters on premedical preparation, application and admissions processes, financial aid, medical school curriculums, information for minority students, and other topics. It also contains information about every medical school in the United States and Canada. This book should serve as your guide in applying to medical school. Other books may also be helpful to you in the application and admission process. The Association of American Medical colleges publishes the AAMC Curriculum Directory. It contains information on the curriculum at each medical school in the country.

The AAMC also publishes *Minority Student Opportunities in US Medical Schools*.

This is an excellent way to identify those who act as minority student advocates at various medical schools nationally. There are additional books that may be helpful to you, consult your counselor or a reference librarian.

10. Prioritize schools

You should prioritize the schools listed on your AMCAS application based on your visits to various medical schools. Decide which discussions with minority medical

students and recruiters were most informative. Get helpful information from books you have purchased. Consider all aspects of interviews, geography, family, and finances. You could simply rank the schools you are applying to from most desirable to least desirable, or perhaps group them in categories that pertain to likes and dislikes.

Prioritizing your choices of medical schools will force you to become knowledgeable about the philosophy, curriculum, and other aspects of the medical school to which you are applying. This knowledge can help you project yourself as a serious applicant during an interview.

Once you have prioritized the schools, it will be much easier and quicker to deal with the problem (nice problem!) of multiple acceptances. For example, if your first acceptance comes from your fifth-rated school, you can accept the offer from that school and withdraw your application from schools you have rated lower. If you are subsequently accepted at a third-rated school, you can withdraw your acceptance from the fifth-rated school. If you withdraw early enough, you can get back your deposit. Subsequently, if you are accepted at a first-rated school, you can likewise withdraw your acceptance from the third-rated school. In essence, you can work your way to the top of your priority list to ultimately enroll at the most desirable school of acceptance.

Another benefit of prioritizing and early withdrawal of an acceptance or application is that it may result in more minority students being enrolled as freshmen in medical school classes. Many medical schools informally attempt to enroll a number of minority



students within a set range. Furthermore, several medical schools, informally, fill the vacancies left by minority students who turn down an offer of acceptance with other minority students from a waiting list. Your quick decision makes this process faster for persons active in minority admissions.

11. Realistically evaluate your financial status

Before applying, make sure you will be able to meet the expense of the application process. This includes additional application processing fees and travel expenses associated with interviews.

Be prepared to spend money over the course of the application period. As well as the AMCAS application, which can get expensive depending on the number of schools you apply to, most medical schools will require an additional application processing fee prior to accepting secondary information. Depending on where you apply, fees can vary with each school. Obviously, applying to several schools, in particular to private schools where the secondary fees are usually highest, can become expensive.

One way to minimize application expenses is to apply for a fee waiver from AMCAS. This not only reduces your original AMCA application fee, but also gives notice to the medical schools to which you have applied that you are of limited economic means. In general, a medical school will grant a waiver of secondary fees if you have already received a waiver from AMCAS. You should



contact each school individually, preferably in writing, to determine which schools can grant you this special waiver. Keep in mind that processing a request for a fee waiver from AMCAS takes time and will inevitably delay receipt of your AMCAS application materials at the various medical schools you apply to. Be sure to apply for the waiver as early as possible and make sure that all relevant information is submitted correctly.

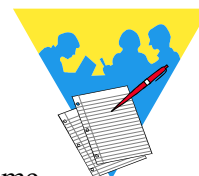
In addition to the application expense, you must also be prepared to deal with costs of accommodations and travel to various schools that grant you interviews. Try to group your interviews so that you can visit as many regional schools as possible at the same time. If you are expecting an invitation from a particular school, many admissions offices will work with you to try to coordinate your interview at a date that is convenient and cost effective. This is especially true for applicants who will be traveling long distance to attend an interview. Here again, timeliness is important since most schools are better equipped to handle these requests when they are given sufficient time to prepare a schedule. Last minute requests or changes in scheduling, especially late in the application process will meet with less success.

With regard to accommodations at the time of the interview, you should first of all make every effort to stay with family, friends, and/or former premed-club-affiliated members. If you have been in contact with the Minority Affairs Office of the school at which you will be interviewing, you may seek their assistance in recommending medical students with whom you



might be able to stay. Many schools have active chapters of minority medical student associations (Student National Medical Association, Chicano/Latino Medical Student Association, Association of Native American Medical Students, etc.) and often they will make it a priority to assist minority interviews in this way. Check with each school as soon as you have word of an interview to see if an established system for accommodating interviews is in place.

These helpful tips were compiled from applicant conferences conducted or supported by the Health Professions Career Opportunity Program (HPCOP). Advice and opinions came from a variety of minority affairs staff, minority faculty and medical students, financial aid officers, admissions officers, and representatives from each California medical school. For more information regarding the topics discussed in this article contact:



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